

# THE "LOST" BARNESVILLE TRACK ROCK

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## Abstract.

The second of the two Barnesville Track Rocks first illustrated by Ward (1872) and by Whittlesey (1872) was buried or at least partially covered for many years and has remained largely undescribed since its rediscovery. Swauger could not find it in his original visit to the site and later simply confirmed that Whittlesey's sketch was accurate, without providing any illustrations (Swauger 1978). Those of the 45 carvings which could still be discerned on several recent visits are illustrated herein, and are compared with Ward's and Whittlesey's illustrations. Like the carvings on the adjacent Barnesville Track Rock 1, these carvings are gradually deteriorating due to weather.

## Introduction.

The earliest study of the Barnesville Track Rocks occurred in 1857 when Thomas Kite, a Cincinnati bookkeeper with an antiquarian interest, made plaster casts of the carvings. The whereabouts of these casts remains unknown, but several are illustrated by James Warner Ward (1872: 60), who visited the site "soon afterward" according to Whittlesey (Read and Whittlesey 1877: 66) and made detailed sketches (presumably before he moved to New York in 1859). Although Whittlesey averred that Ward's sketches were made with much care, "he being not only an artist but an antiquarian," it was subsequently found that there were important omissions. Ward (1816-1897) was born in Newark, New Jersey, and became the pupil and assistant of John Locke in the Medical College of Ohio at Cincinnati, taught general literature and botany at the Female College of Ohio in 1853-54, and subsequently was a co-editor of the *Botanical Magazine and Horticultural Review*, published in Cincinnati. He moved to New York in 1859 and in 1879 became librarian of the Grosvenor Public Library in Buffalo. Besides composing music for the voice and organ, Ward was a member of botanical and microscopical societies, as well as publishing poetry (W, J.G. 1894: 124). He is not known to have made any other contributions to archaeology, however.

Whittlesey (1872) and Read and Whittlesey (1877) provided more accurate diagrams of the two sandstone boulders at the Belmont Co. site (33-BL-2) that are known to bear incontrovertibly prehistoric Indian rock carvings. Swauger (1974a, 1974b, 1978) visited the site in 1971 and restudied the larger of the two rocks but was unable to locate the second. This

"lost" rock was rediscovered by Earl Noble and Charles F. Coss in 1975, and Swauger revisited the site in 1976 but did not study or record the second rock, simply confirming that Whittlesey's drawing was accurate. (This conclusion is essentially correct, although there are some discrepancies in Whittlesey's drawing and that made for Swauger by Clifford J. Morrow, Jr.). Subsequently, the carvings on both rocks were outlined with black paint, presumably by the owner, Robert S. Wood, as a boulder at the entrance to the site is marked in black paint, "Wood Track Rocks." This appears to have been done after 1984, as Moseley (1984) provides a photograph of a carving lacking the black paint. Mr. Wood died in 1996 and the site was purchased by the Archaeological Conservancy in 1999.

## Present Condition.

The site was visited in late April, 2009, and particular attention was given to the second or "lost" rock, as apparently no photographic record of it has ever been published. Although several subsequent visits were made in May, June, and July, 2009, and despite the generally high quality of Whittlesey's drawing, not all of the carvings could be detected. While current conventional wisdom decries the painting or even the chalking of petroglyphs, it would have been very difficult to locate some of these features, even with Whittlesey's excellent rendition, had they not been painted. It would appear that considerable deterioration has occurred since Swauger examined the rock, as he stated that the designs were clear, "Having suffered almost no damage, a circumstance probably due to their having been covered with a mantle of earth and shrub growth as long ago as 1925..."

Fortunately, we know that the second rock was fully exposed when Ward and later Whittlesey examined it in the 19th century, so no convincing claim can be made that it was deliberately covered by Algonkian or Anishinauae elders to prevent their "teaching rocks" from being viewed by the incognescenti (cf. Weeks 1972). Some of the carvings appear to have deteriorated despite having been covered or since they were uncovered and painted. In particular the black paint has peeled considerably in many instances and the rock surface is discolored by lichens. The edges of the rock have already become partially covered again by recent leaf mold.

## Discussion.

Although Swauger (1974a, b) assigned numbers to each design illustrated by

Whittlesey, he had not seen the rock at that time, and we are left to conjecture whether he later actually verified the presence of all 45 designs (his nos. 63-107) discerned by Whittlesey. In all fairness to Swauger, whom I admire immensely for his work in the study of Ohio Valley rock art, the tone and brevity of his 1978 article and his failure to include more detailed study of the second rock in his 1984 book on Ohio rock art suggest that his interest in the Barnesville Track Rocks had waned by the time the second rock was re-discovered.

Ward's and Whittlesey's drawings are shown here in Figures 1 and 2. Reference to specific carvings will be to Swauger's numbering system, which assigns numbers 63 through 107 to designs on the second, "lost" Barnesville Track Rock (Table 1). Numbers 108 through 113 are assigned to designs on the larger Rock No. 1. Also, Swauger accidentally assigned the number 82 to two different designs on Rock 2, the snake carving and an animal track immediately to the northwest of the head of the snake. For purposes of reference, the paw carving is here referred to as 82 and the snake as 82a.

It is remarkable that with the exception of Design 82a (snake) all can be interpreted as animal or bird tracks (ignoring the debate over whether "cuspidiform" petroglyphs represent arrows or bird tracks; see Murphy and Carskadden 1985). Adjacent tracks, however, often point in different directions, so that either interpretation results in conflicting directions being indicated, thus to some extent supporting the currently fashionable belief that the carvings are less the result of functional or directional information intent and more likely the product of trance-induced mystical endeavors such as vision quests or shamanistic practices (Weeks 2002, Lenik 2009). On the other hand, the consistency of the motifs and predominance of a relatively small number of designs suggests individual clan or totemic emblems.

Table 1 lists the designs by Swauger's motif number. The motif interpretations are highly subjective. The more elongate footprints may be interpreted as representing human footprints, though some might be bear. The more equilateral prints could represent a variety of animals, including bear. It is noteworthy that the great toe is consistently larger than the others, so that even when the outline of the foot is ambiguous, left and right footprints can be distinguished. Figure 93 is intriguing and may represent an extremely exaggerated great

toe associated with Figure 92. Swauger has outlined the difficulties in assigning such tracks to a specific animal species. Some I merely call pawprints, he would call bear; some I call bear, he would call human. It is worth noting that while Swauger cited mammalogist J. Kenneth Doult as concluding none of the paw impressions could be identified to species and some could not be distinguished even as belonging to the dog or cat family, Whittlesey was probably nearer the truth in identifying many of these four-toed tracks as representing dog or wolf (Swauger 1974a: 37, Whittlesey in Read and Whittlesey 1877: 73). Latterly, Swauger preferred "cloven hoof" to deer track, as they might represent elk or bison; but I will stick to deer.

Reference to Table 1 will help in identifying individual carvings in the accompanying photographs. Not all carvings indicated by Whittlesey could be discerned, despite several visits, and some are not clearly visible in the accompanying illustrations, so that this article cannot be considered a definitive catalog of the motifs.

**Table 1**

Swauger No.	Motif Type	Comments	Figure
63	Footprint	Not visible; probably bear track	
64	Bird track	Not visible	
65	Footprint	Bear track	3
66	Footprint	Mislabeled 65 in Swauger 1984	4
67	Pawprint	Bear track	4
68	Pawprint	Oriented more toward 67 than 68	4
69	Pawprint	Slightly west of Whittlesey location	4
70	Footprint	Toes not shown in previous drawing	4
71	Pawprint		4
72	Pawprint	Not visible	
73	Pawprint	Only "heel" visible	4
74	Bird track	Barely visible	3
75	Footprint	Barely visible	3
76	Footprint	Toes indicated by Whittlesey	5
77	Pawprint	Faintly visible	5
78	Footprint	Faintly visible	5
79	Pawprint	Not visible	3
80	Footprint	Not visible	3
81	Pawprint	"Heel" visible	7
82	Pawprint		7
83a	Snake	Tail misrepresented by Whittlesey	6, 7
83	Deer track		4
84	Pawprint	Not visible	4
85	Bird track	Partially visible	4
86	Footprint	Not visible	4
87	Footprint	Not visible	4
88	Footprint	Faintly visible	8
89	Footprint	Toes not shown in previous drawings	8
90	Pawprint	Bear track with unusual appendage	6
91	Deer tracks		6
92	Footprint	With Design 93 as elongate toe (?)	5
93	Anomalous	Swauger calls it a "pit"	5
94	Anomalous	Faint; Swauger; "deer tracks"	5
95	Pawprint	Faintly visible	5
96	Footprint	Faintly visible "heel"	5
97	Footprint	Not visible	5
98	Pawprint	Slightly east of Whittlesey location	5
99	Pawprint		5
100	Pawprint		5
101	Bird track		8
102	Bird track		8
103	Bird track		6, 8
104	Bird track		8
105	Bird track		8
106	Bird track		8
107	Bird track		8

Table 1. Barnesville Track Rock 2 Designs and Figure Numbers

Designs 63 and 64, a foot or paw print and a bird track, could not be detected in the rock. A close-up of Design 65, considered to represent a bear paw, is shown in Figure 3. Immediately above it, peeling black paint probably represented Figure 75, a footprint, but the design was not clear; nor could Designs 79 or 80, a paw and footprint, which should be within the frame of the photograph, be discerned. Design 75 does appear to be more directly north of Design 65 than to the northeast, as shown by Whittlesey. Design 74, a bird track, lies to the lower right of Design 65 and can be seen in the rock but does not show up well in Figure 3. Design 80, a footprint oriented in the opposite direction to Design 75 could not be recognized.

Designs 66 through 71 and Design 73 form a closely arranged group that is relatively well preserved along the northwestern edge of the rock (Figure 4). The most conspicuous carvings are two pawprints (67, 68) situated between two footprints (66, 70) that face in opposite directions. It should be noted that Whittlesey did not recognize the toe prints on Design 70, although these are still evident today. His drawing also inaccurately represents the direction of the smaller paw print (68). Design 67 is regarded as a bear paw impression and Design 68 possibly as a dog or wolf track. In general, Whittlesey was more conservative than Ward in identifying the animals responsible for these tracks, and Swauger was even more so. As noted, Swauger (1974: 37) uses an assessment by mammalogist J. Kenneth Doult to dismiss attempts to identify any of the pawprints. Doult felt that *some* [italics added] of the four-toed Barnesville carvings could not be distinguished as belonging to either the dog or cat family, but he did not indicate which, if any, might be, and comparison with modern tracks suggests that perhaps none of them can be so distinguished.

Unnoted by Whittlesey is a distinct depression to the left of the heel of Design 70; this may be a paw or footprint but no toe depressions can be seen. Design 69, a paw print, is more in line with Designs 68 and 71 than indicated by Whittlesey. Design 73 is very faint, represented only by the "heel" of the paw print. The deer or elk tracks (83) are well preserved, pawprint 82 less so. Designs 84-86, which appear to have been a paw or footprint and a turkey track, should also show in Fig. 4, to the left of the deer track, but only an amorphous linear depression can be seen.

Along the southern edge of the rock, another group of carvings consists of Designs 76-78 and 92-100. Most of these are visible in Figures. Designs 78 and 96 are very faint, and Designs 94 and 95 can be located only by virtue of small remnants of black paint on the rock. Design 74 can barely be made out on the rock but does not show in Figure 5.

The most conspicuous carving is of a snake (Design 82a) that lies in the center of the carvings. This is shown in Figures 6 and 7. Although Whittlesey's drawing is generally accurate, the tail is quite different. He appears to have incorporated in the snake design a separate set of tracks similar to those of nearby Design 91, also shown in Figure 6. A close-up of the area around the head of the snake design is shown in Figure 7, mainly to illustrate pawprint Design 82. Design 81 lies between the snake head and the right corner of the scale in Figure 7 but is not discernible. Adjacent to the tail end of the snake, Design 90 is a paw print (probably bear) but has a perplexing U-shaped element; possibly this is an unfinished footprint simply adjacent to Design 90 rather than part of it.

The final group of designs consists of tracks on the northeastern section of Rock 2 and are shown in Figure 8. Design 88 is a footprint discernible only as a black patch between turkeytracks 101 and 104. Design 89 is a small footprint shown just above the scale in Figure 8, between turkeytracks 102 and 105, although Design 102 is only partially visible. Although Morrow's drawing (Swauger 1974a: 32) does not indicate depressions for the toes, these are shown by Whittlesey. Figure 91 consists of two pairs of small tracks identified as deer by Swauger. I cannot come up with any more likely interpretation, but note that another pair occurs at the end of the snake's (Design 82a) tail, as shown in Figure 6. The remaining designs, 101 - 107 all represent bird tracks and are concentrated in the northeastern portion of the rock (Figure 8). All of these trend in a generally northeastern direction except for Design 103, which trends nearly north, and Design 104, which trends southeasterly.

## Conclusions.

The drawings provided by Whittlesey are demonstrably more accurate than the copies of his drawings made by Clifford J. Morrow, Jr., for Swauger and are certainly more accurate than Ward's drawings. Nonetheless, there appear to be a few discrepancies in orientation and design between Whittlesey's representations and the surviving petroglyphs. The present-day condition of the carvings is of considerable concern, for it is clear that those near the margins of the rock, where they have been covered from time to time, are much better preserved than those near the center of the rock face, where the effects of erosion and even fire are more evident. A close-up of Design 91 is shown in Figure 9 to emphasize the faintness and susceptibility to erosion of these carvings. Although ownership by the Archaeological Conservancy now protects them from stripmining, the carvings are still being degraded by erosion and other factors.



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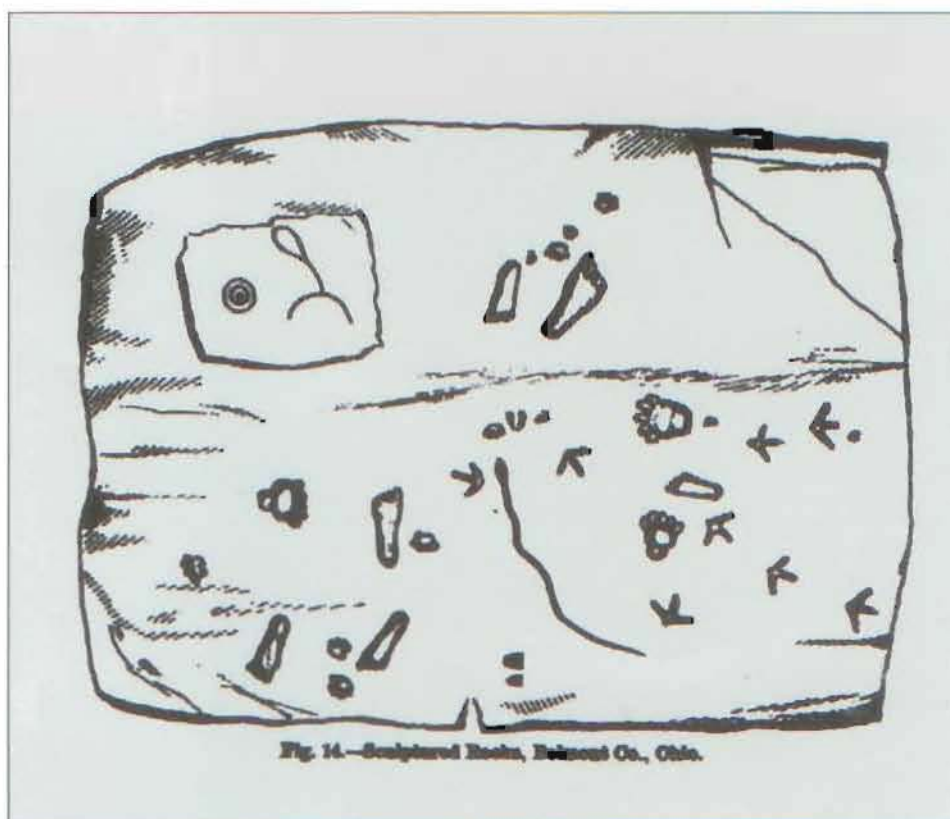


Figure 1 James Ward's early drawing of Barnesville Rock 2.

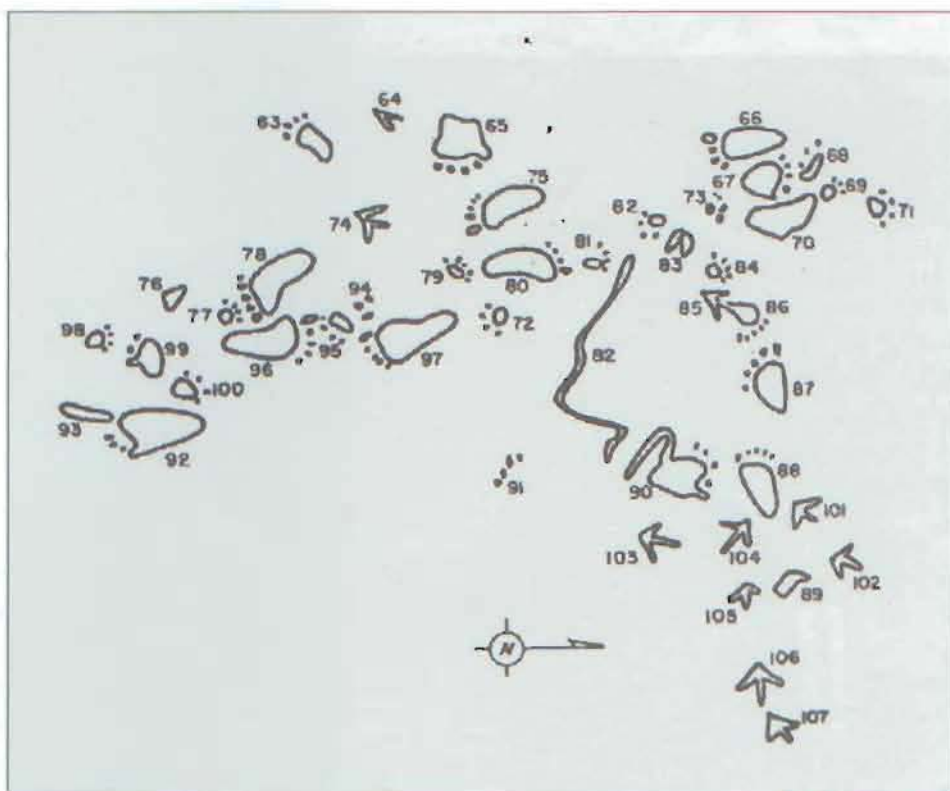


Figure 2 Whittlesey's more accurate drawing of Barnesville Rock 2. Numbering has been supplied by Swauger (1974).



*Figure 3.  
Swauger's Design 65 (above scale),  
74 (lower right of scale),  
and 75 (paint above 65);  
79 and 80 slightly above and  
to the right of 65 not visible.*



*Figure 4.  
Swauger's Designs  
66-71, 73, and 82-86.*





Figure 5. Southern edge of Barnesville Track Rock 2. Designs 76, 92-93, and 98-100 clearly shown. Footprints 78 and 96 faintly visible; above them, Designs 94 and 95 show only as faint patches of black paint. Design 74 is present but not visible in photograph.



Figure 6. Designs 82a (snake), 90, 91, and 103. Note tracks at tail of snake.



Figure 7.  
Closeup of the head  
of Design 82a (snake),  
82, and 81; 83 not visible.  
Also note pit to left of scale.



Figure 8.  
Designs 88-90 and 102-107.  
Tail of snake (82a) at left center.  
Turkey tracks 106 and 107  
below right end of scale.  
Note fire reddened sandstone.



Figure 9.  
Close-up  
of Design 91.